# GUIDE TO THE AL1 SOUTHEAST ASIA FILE

[The term "Southeast Asia" may be variously defined depending upon the criteria utilized. The OWC file unit, AL1, does not specify any areal boundaries, but an examination of the sources processed for this file reveals a rather clear areal delimitation based on conventional geographical grounds. This conforms to the definition given in 6: Fisher (p. 12-B), namely that Southeast Asia "covers the area lying east of India/Pakistan and to the south of China, i.e., Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaya, British Borneo, Indonesia, and the Philippines." A somewhat different conception of Southeast Asia is set forth by LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave in their basic handbook, Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia (1964). They state that: "Ethnologically speaking, northern Southeast Asia does not stop at the China border; centuries of migrations, trade, and political relationships link the peoples of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam with the southern provinces of China — Yunnan, Kweichow, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung. This entire region, which might be termed greater mainland Southeast Asia, forms an integrated whole for purposes of the study of racial and linguistic history, ethnic distributions, and cultural evolution" (p. vi). Furthermore, LeBar (Personal Communication, 1970) thinks Assam and East Bengal should be included in this region, and, on the basis of similar criteria, he would expand the scope of island Southeast Asia to include the Formosan Aborigines, the coastal areas of west New Guinea, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and probably Madagascar.

An outstanding characteristic of the entire area is a high degree of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Thus the majority of the peoples of Southeast Asia speak languages which may be classified among four major language stocks: Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai, and Malayo-Polynesian (LéBar, Hickey, and Musgrave, 1964: xi-xiii). The peoples range in culture from simple hunters and gatherers to large literate civilizations. Nevertheless, there are a number of widespread traits which, collectively, provide a unifying element. These include aspects of family organization, a respected position for women, the propitiation of malignant spirits, the

use of iron for tools, and other minor traits (cf. Robbins Burling, Hill Farms and Padi Fields, 1965: 1-7). Also, one of the outstanding features of the human geography of the area throughout historic times has been the much lower density of population which it has supported, in comparison with the two neighboring areas of South (Indian) and East (Sino-Japanese) Asia (6: Fisher, p. 12-C).

Finally, and paradoxically as Burling points out, it is one aspect of the area's very diversity that provides the most important unifying theme: nearly every country in Southeast Asia has both hill people and plains people, and the contrast — and sometimes conflict — between the two ways of life constitutes a fundamental sociopolitical pattern. The nucleus of plains people forms in each case a relatively homogeneous and dense population, each speaking a single dominant language, and each characterized by adherence to one of the world's great religions and subsistence based upon intensive wet rice agriculture. On the other hand, in most countries there is also a minority of hill people who are always far more heterogeneous. They speak a multitude of languages, have had no political unity among themselves, and until the last century have never had more than tenuous political ties with the plains. The hill people usually practice shifting agriculture, and tend to retain longer their localized traditional religions (cf. Burling, 1965: 4-6).

The Southeast Asia file may be viewed both as a contextual file and a "holding" file. It is a contextual file in the sense that some of the sources (e.g. 6: Fisher; 14: Heine-Geldern; and 18: Firth) present general data pertinent to much or all of the area, and which provide a background or setting for more specific files on particular countries or peoples. By a "holding" file is meant that many of the sources processed contain specific data on several or many countries or peoples, and the source as a whole could not, therefore, be processed for any of the more narrowly delimited files; but these sources can be included in a general file

such as AL1, and the pertinent sections marked for other more specific files.

The file contains 22 sources (no source was processed for code no. 3). These sources may be grouped into several main categories for purposes of discussion. The first category is a miscellaneous one in that, except for 6: Fisher, which attempts to define "Southeast Asia" from several different viewpoints, the other sources are highly specialized studies providing a variety of anthropological perspectives on the area. 19: Sneath presents a blood-group analysis of 100 samples from each of four tribes in Malaya and Borneo, while 13: Sebeok delineates the languages and dialects of Southeast Asia and their relationships. 23: Benedict is a major study focusing on the reconstruction of Sino-Tibetan kinship systems through the phonological and semantic analysis of the Karen, Chinese, and Thai languages, and 14: Heine-Geldern constitutes a valuable interpretation of conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia, indicating the influence of religious and cosmological beliefs on political institutions and practices.

The second category deals with geography, demography, and the economy with particular reference to land utilization. The basic work is 5: Dobby, which sets forth an excellent, detailed geographical account of the area. 16: Fryer and 17: Ginsburg survey and discuss the major urban centers, whereas 18: Firth deals with the peasantry, analyzing both the factors influencing their economy, and their interrelations with the larger society. 1: Pelzer focuses on modes of land use for food production, with a detailed presentation of agricultural colonization and settlement programs in the Philippines and the Netherlands Indies. 15: Adams and 10: Thompson are narrower studies, the first presenting a review of the anthropological and botanical literature on rice cultivation, the second being a survey of labor conditions in each country.

The third category deals with colonial policies and colonial administration. The major source is 7: Furnivall, a comprehensive comparative study of political, economic, and social developments in Burma

under British rule and the Netherlands Indies under Dutch rule. This is complemented by 4: Cady, an analysis of policies followed by the British and American governments in fostering the development of self-government and independence in Burma, Malaya, and the Philippines. Also relevant is 8: Furnivall, a description of the history of the educational systems in each country, including the influence of different government policies. Finally, 9: Christian is concerned with the Anglo-French commercial rivalry in the area during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The fourth category contains two sources on the Chinese minority in Southeast Asia. 2: Purcell remains the key comprehensive account of this subject, while 11: Kinnersley is a rather fascinating description of the Chinese lottery called Hua-Hoey, which is based on 36 mythical personages, and involves dream interpretation.

The fifth and final category consists of 4 sources by Sherborn (numbers 12, 20, 21, and 22) containing a total of about 2,900 bibliographical sources on the area, mostly in Dutch, covering the period from January 1888 to June 1894, and dealing with the natural and social sciences, commerce, and travel accounts.]

Processed in 1955-1956